

CLAIMS

1. A method for interactively selecting a product in a networked environment, the method comprising:
- providing a product criterion to a client within a page, the product criterion including a plurality of possible selections;
 - receiving one of the plurality of possible selections from the client; and
 - providing product information to the client within the page, the product information including information related to the one of the plurality of possible selections received from the client;
- whereby a user at the client may determine whether to purchase a product that includes the one of the plurality of possible selections.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising receiving a purchase order from the client and fulfilling the purchase order.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the product information includes information comparing the one of the plurality of possible selections to one or more other ones of the plurality of possible selections.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein the product criterion includes an objective characteristic of the product.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein the product criterion includes a subjective characteristic of the product.
6. The method of claim 1 further comprising receiving a category selection from the client and, in response thereto, providing category information to the client, the category information including the product criterion.

7. The method of claim 1 further comprising/providing a product selection set to the client, the product selection set including one or more products that conform to the one of the plurality of possible selections.
8. The method of claim 7 wherein the client includes a hypertext transfer protocol client and the product selection set includes a list of hyperlinks to product descriptions for the one or more products included in the product selection set.
9. The method of claim 1 wherein the product criterion is at least one of a requirement category related to a product feature, an attribute, or a usability need.
10. The method of claim 7 further comprising:
tracking a user session, the user session including a change from a first one of the plurality of possible selections to a second one of the plurality of possible selections; and
applying fuzzy logic to interpret a significance of the change in order to determine the product selection set.
11. The method of claim 1 wherein inferences concerning user preferences are made based upon a selection history.
12. The method of claim 1 wherein inferences concerning user preferences are made based upon a user profile.
13. The method of claim 1 wherein the product is at least one of a good and a service.
14. The method of claim 1 wherein the product is at least one of a financial product or a financial service.
15. A computer program product for interactively selecting a product in a networked environment, the computer program product comprising:

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computer executable code to provide a product criterion to a client within a page, the product criterion including a plurality of possible selections;

computer executable code to receive one of the plurality of possible selections from the client; and

computer executable code to provide product information to the client within the page, the product information including information related to the one of the plurality of possible selections;

whereby a user at the client may determine whether to purchase a product that includes the one of the plurality of possible selections.

16. A system for interactively selecting a product in a networked environment, the system comprising:

first providing means for providing a product criterion to a client within a page, the product criterion including a plurality of possible selections;

receiving means for receiving one of the plurality of possible selections from the client; and

second providing means for providing product information to the client within the page, the product information including information related to the one of the plurality of possible selections;

whereby a user at the client may determine whether to purchase a product that includes the one of the plurality of possible selections.

17. A database for use with an interactive product selector, the database including:

a first field, the first field including product category information that identifies a category to which the record relates;

a second field, the second field including a criterion for the category;

a third field, the third field including a text of a question relating to the criterion;

a fourth field, the fourth field including a plurality of options, each option representing a possible selection for the criterion;

a fifth field, the fifth field identifying a control that specifies how the plurality of options are presented to a client; and

a sixth field, the sixth field including selection guidance relating to each one of the plurality of options.

18. The database of claim 17, further comprising a seventh field, the seventh field including links to one or more additional criteria to be presented for each one of the plurality of options.

19. An interactive product selector for assisting a user with a product selection, the selector comprising a database and a client connected in a communicating relationship with the database, the database storing a plurality of product criteria and, for each product criterion, the database storing a plurality of options, the client configured to retrieve a group of product criteria and an associated group of options from the database, and the client configured to display the group of the product criteria and an associated group of options within a page, the client further configured to modify the group of product criteria in response to a selection of an option, thereby providing a modified group, and to display the modified group within the page.

20. The selector of claim 19 wherein the client modifies the group of product criteria by communicating the selection to a server and, in response thereto, receiving the modified group from the server.

21. The selector of claim 20 wherein the client is further configured to retrieve from the database, for one of the options, one or more next criteria, the next criteria specifying one or more criteria to be added to the modified group, the client interpreting a selection of the one of the options to modify the group of product criteria according to the next criteria.